Leveraging the .gov Top-level Domain

The .gov domain is a top-level domain (TLD) that was established to make it easy to identify US-based government organizations on the internet. All three branches of the US Government, all 50 states, and many local governments use .gov for their domains.

The DotGov Program, based at the US General Services Administration (GSA), manages the .gov TLD.

Why should State and Local Election Officials be interested in .gov?

Since a .gov domain is only available to bona fide US-based government organizations, using it signals trust and credibility. This can help a state or local election office establish its digital services (e.g., websites, emails) as official, trusted sources for voter information.

There are also security benefits to using.gov:

- The .gov registrar requires the use of 2-step verification for all users, and user accounts cannot use passwords that have been found in known data breaches.
- Web browsers now allow domains to be "preloaded" as HTTPS-only. Preloading lets web browsers know to always use HTTPS to connect with any website on that domain.
- The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), GSA, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) help monitor for issues in the namespace.

How do I obtain a .gov domain?

To obtain a .gov domain, follow the steps at https://home.dotgov.gov/registration/. Registration is open to election officials in states, native sovereign nations, or local governments like cities, counties, townships, and parishes. The cost is $400 per year.

An organization's eligibility is based on its legal operating authority. For instance, some election boards are legally independent from their municipalities. These organizations can register as "independent intrastate" government organizations. Complete descriptions of the various domain designations and requirements are available at https://home.dotgov.gov/registration/requirements.

Displaying non-government advertisements or promulgating political or campaign information is not allowed, and can result in domain suspension.